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ABSTRACT

One of a series of studies related to the Delphi research project: "Policy Instruments for Higher Education in the Western Europe of the Future", this paper presents the issue of internationalization of European higher education through three types of data. First, analysis of present European Community (EC) initiatives on education showed that a number of successful programs have already developed. However, the next stage of cooperation cannot be established without coordination between the higher education structures within various countries. Second, an analysis of the results of a survey of 700 experts from 17 countries concluded that for some areas the expectations for a European higher education policy are auspicious. Yet, another layer of bureaucracy may not help produce quality higher education. A review of the United States higher education structure in which the states have primary responsibility while the federal government imposes some policies, found that such a structure may serve as a model. But, conditions in Europe may not be favorable for such a system. The results of these examinations indicate that the current changes in Europe call for a supra-national higher education policy, that a supra-national body should have a stimulating, not administrative function, and that there exit several important obstacles to this type of education policy. Notes and 33 references are included. (JB)

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Towards a European higher education policy ?

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INTRODUCTION

If any issue of supra-national importance in education policy has developed over the past few years, it has been the pursuit of improved internationalization. Its impact on international and national policy is however still minor compared to what can be expected of the effects from the introduction of a single market in Western Europe and the newly created opportunities for cooperation between East and West European countries.

Internationalization, being the collective definition of almost everything that deals with foreign countries -their customs, cultures and languages- can have many different faces. For each of the different stages of education, primary, secondary and post-secondary, the possibilities are quite different. The consequences for primary education will be limited to increased attention being paid to international aspects in the curriculum and the exchange of teachers, while the possibilities for secondary education will be more extensive. The most promising possibilities for increased internationalization are however in the field of post-secondary education and research. One can anticipate a future pattern of both students and faculty studying or living abroad for a substantial period. The only area that has already established a substantial international orientation is research. For research the national frontiers have never been a relevant factor. The prospect of further internationalization is likely to result in even more international research projects, which might affect the willingness of national governments to invest in basic research (1).

In this contribution to the 6th Conference of the European Association for

Research and Development in Higher Education, the issue of internationalization is considered. Its scope is limited to the effects of internationalization on universities and non-university institutions, especially focussed on the possible consequences for higher education policy at the national and international level. The main issues addressed are: what are the consequences of internationalization for national and international higher education policy, what are the prospects for a kind of policy direction that is less nationally and more internationally oriented?

CHAPTER 1. THE FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

Internationalization is here to stay. No matter whether one approves of it or not, it is inevitable that increasing attention will be paid to a more international approach to higher education and research. Institutions, faculty and students will be confronted with its effects, and national governments will be forced to facilitate this increased international orientation.

The way this facilitation will occur, is still very much open. In more and more countries, especially in the EC countries, this issue is very much on the agenda. It will be, for example, one of the highlights of the EC-conference in Sienna in November 1990 (2).

The debate is a challenge for higher education policy on the one hand, and a threat to institutions on the other. A challenge, in terms of opening up the possibilities for institutions and students to be able to optimize in practical ways the opportunities offered by internationalization. A threat, if the policy debate is to lead only to new layers of bureaucracy and ineffective policy direction at the national or international level. Given the general preference of higher education institutions not to be bothered by government policy and the doubts about the effectiveness of government policy direction on the national level (3), the eventual introduction of yet another, European, layer of government influence should only be considered if a positive outcome is expected.

In this paper, the future of a European higher education policy is narrowed down to the following three basic questions:

1. Do the introduction of a single market in 1993, increasing cooperation of EC-countries with non EC countries, and the opening-up of Eastern-

Europe require a supra-national, European wide, higher education policy?

2. If so, what different scenarios can be designed for the division of labor between the supra-national policy organization and the individual national governments.

   Or more concretely: What issues could or should be subject to a European h.e. policy, what subjects could or should be left to the national governments, and why?

3. What are the changes/limitations involved in the establishment of a more European-wide higher education policy?

In order to be able to answer these questions, three types of data are used.

First, the present EC initiatives regarding education and research are reviewed briefly. Their development over the last 10 years is analyzed, and it is concluded that this increased attention has resulted in a number of successful programs. It is however doubtful whether a stage of cooperation beyond this type of programs can be established without a minimum of coordination between the higher education structures within the various countries.

Second, the first results of a European Delphi-study (mc-Daniel, 1991 forthcoming), in which around 700 experts out of 17 countries participated, are scrutinized for relevant statements on possible future higher education policy. It is concluded that for some areas and concrete issues the expectations for a European higher education policy are auspicious. Generally however, the impression is that another layer of bureaucracy would not be productive to the responsiveness, innovative capacity and pursuit of quality in higher education institutions.

Third, the higher education structure of the United States is reviewed. In the US, the 50 states have the primary responsibility for higher education policy, while on the federal level some important features of higher education policy are carried out without interference in the autonomy of the states. Given the plausibility of the statement that national states in Europe will not be willing to give up their power to shape their educational system, the US example which respects the sovereignty of the states, might serve as a model.

The conclusion of this part of the study is, that the conditions in the US are more favorable for a federal higher education policy than the conditions for a European education policy in Europe. The instruments used in the US could serve as an model for the establishment of a European higher education policy.

In chapter 4 some the conclusions are drawn.

CHAPTER 2. PRESENT EC-ACTIVITIES

2.1 Introduction

At the time that the EC, and its predecessors, were established, the issue of European education was not on the agenda. The treaties had an economical background. It has only been since the mid-Seventies when attention was drawn to the issue of education and the prospect of enhanced cooperation. Starting in 1974, when the representatives of the national governments met in the "Educational Committee", the first, modest, action program for education was approved in 1976.

Interest increased in the beginning of the Eighties, with the start of EURYDICE, an information network, and an accepted resolution in 1982. Most of the activities were directed towards questions of the connection between the labor-market and education, and a number of more specific subjects such as affirmative action, literacy projects and integration of handicapped pupils in ordinary institutions. Higher education was not (or at least not yet) massively involved.

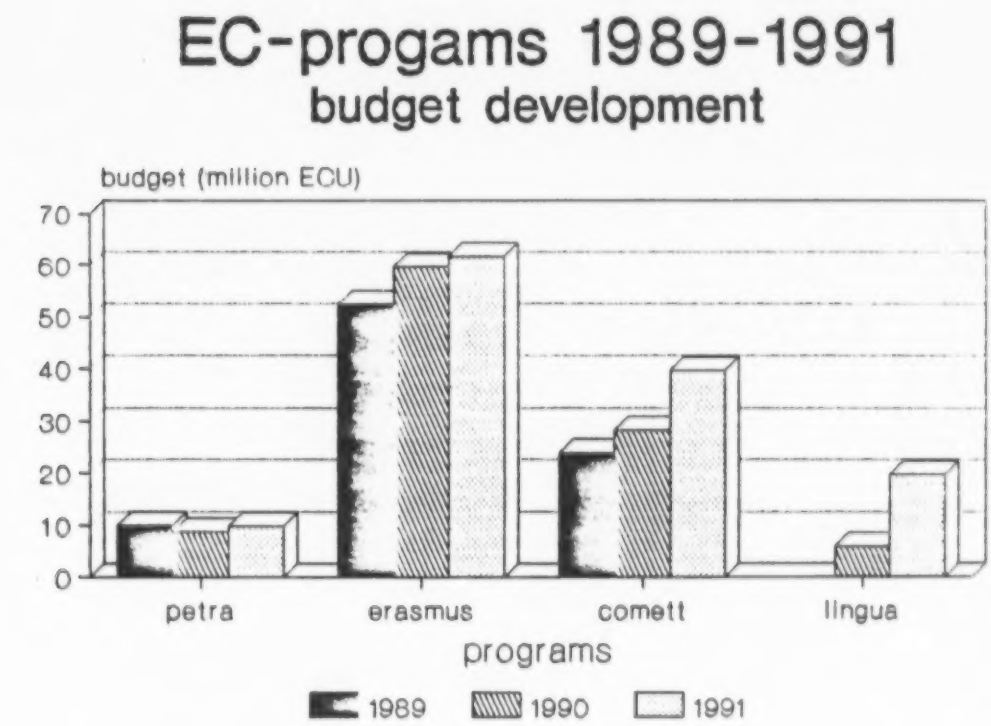
In the mid-Eighties, the first initiatives regarding higher education were discussed and implemented. Increased mobility of students and faculty was facilitated by a number of projects, and the growing impact of technology on the economy and on education was also the subject of programs.

Accreditation of degrees formed the second sector of interest and the establishment of a niche for education in the Brussels bureaucracy in the form of a task force, became the third.

The budget for EC activities regarding education is growing, the amount of projects funded.

The following table provides information on the budgets of the four most extensive programs.

figure 1. Budget development EC-programs



source: EG budget 1991 p 385-391

National governments have recently shown more and more interest in the future of their higher education systems and expressed concern whether their future needs and goals can be accomplished in a Europe that is economically reshaped by the introduction of a single market at January 1, 1993. Furthermore, the major political and economic changes in East-European countries will rephrase a number of basic national notions on the relationship between society in general and higher education in particular.

Nevertheless the growing interest in the formulation of a European higher education policy, has been overshadowed in EC-circles (or in other cooperative supra-national organizations) by national interests and the fear of undesired cultural dominance if educational structures were indeed to be subject to international decisions. What result has the present EC policy regarding on higher education had?

2.2 Present EC activities in higher education

Although many different classifications are possible, I would like to summarize the activities of the EC in higher education in five basic categories:

1. the (formal) recognition of qualifications (in terms of [un]conditional acceptance of degrees and modules in other countries than those in which they were conferred),
2. stimulation of mobility of students and faculty,
3. the establishment of information networks and study centers,
4. activities related to improving the university-industry cooperation and the stimulation of research in technology transfer.
5. institutionalization of an unit within the EC apparatus with

responsibility educational tasks.

2.2.1 Recognition of qualifications

An issue of major importance has been the recognition of foreign qualifications at the secondary and post-secondary level of education. It started in the Sixties and Seventies with long and convoluted negotiations on curriculum comparison which were the basis of a limited number of European regulations. It was obvious however that this would not be the final solution for the hundreds of disciplines that would have to undergo such a comparative analysis. A second strategy was the introduction of a general guideline which would facilitate general acceptance of diplomas for vocational education under certain conditions. This still leaves a large number of disciplines not catered for however, especially in the university sector. Alternative schemes will have to be designed in the future.

2.2.2 Increasing the quality of higher education and training through promotion of transnational cooperation and exchanges, including collaboration with industry and commerce (4)

A large number of successful programs were established over the years. Some examples:

In 1987 the ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) was established. The program aims at improved cooperation between institutions of different nationalities and the increase of student mobility. Both institutions and students are eligible for grants.

The LINGUA (Community Action Program to promote Foreign Language Competence in the European Community) established in 1989. The objective is to promote a qualitative and quantitative improvement in foreign language competence among Community citizens.

Youth Exchanges in the EC (Young Workers's Exchange Program and the Youth for Europe Program) have been functioning for a number of years.

The ARION program provides study visits for education specialists, and PETRA (1987) is an action program for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life.

IRIS creates a training method specially adapted to the needs of women, and to increasing the involvement of employers in vocational training programs for women. The program has been in operation since 1988.

TEMPUS (1990) promotes collaboration in the field of higher education with central and eastern Europe.

In 1987 the COMETT (Community Action Program in Education and Training for Technology) started. It is directed towards an improvement in the cooperation between universities and public enterprises. It stimulates the exchange of experience between member states in the field of university-industry cooperation in training. Furthermore, it fosters economies of scale through new jointly-organized training programs to combat specific skills shortages resulting from rapid technological change.

EuroTecnet (1983) is the EC action program aimed at developing vocational training in the new technologies through a number of activities. To mention a few: demonstration projects, a program of transnational cooperation and in-depth studies of relevant aspects.

FORCE (1990) is concerned with the development of continuing education and training in firms.

EURYDICE (European Information Network in the European Community, 1976) is an important network which provides information on all EC activities in the field of education, training and youth, and provides information on the educational structures and policy of the EC countries.

CEDEFOP is the European Center for the Development of Vocational training (1975). It provides information and expertise to improve the planning and implementation of vocational training initiatives in the EC countries.

2.2.3 The establishment of an apparatus for higher education policy

In 1989 the "Task Force Human Resources, Education Training and Youth" was established as a part of the Brussels bureaucracy. Its formation is an acknowledgement of the growing importance of education policy as a subject of EC policy. A further step in the hierarchy would be the upgrading of the Taskforce to a Directorate General, but it will probably take a number of years before the Commission can propose such a change.

2.3 The general direction of higher education policy in the EC

The attention paid to internationalization over the last decade has shown a remarkable increase in all respects. The establishment of more and more EC programs on h.e. directed towards an increasing number of constituencies, more and more money put forward to support the policy, and the creation of a niche in the Brussels bureaucracy are all an indication of the recognition of the importance of internationalization for the future of Europe.

The phase of fruitless negotiations on supra-national issues has been overcome, and the time is ripe to estimate the national desirability of a European policy that influences some aspects of national policy, without conflicting with traditional national or - more important - academic traditions and cultures.

There are some unmistakable obstacles however. The issue of recognition of courses and programs will be one of the most difficult ones. Berg (1990, p. 68) analyzed the problems at stake. A selection:

* federal state structures with highly decentralized administrations affecting the organization of the education sector;
* diversified educational structures which render the comparisons which must be made between educational systems difficult. These problems are directly related to those originating in the lack of uniform or corresponding terminologies and insufficient, inadequate, or difficult-to-manage information;
* diversity in curricular structure and content found in certain countries of the region;
* the non-homologation of credentials and diplomas for certain

professions as the result of national laws;

* lack of adequate and easily recognized and understood indicators for the evaluation of academic and professional competence in order to facilitate the recognition of study, diplomas and degrees.

Theoretically, three strategies can be put forward to solve the problem of recognition. First, the recognition through Europe wide regulations, as was tried in the Sixties and Seventies and which is still the basis of the recognition approach of the general guideline now used. Second, the comparison of curricula in higher education by institutions themselves or by an international agency. This approach, partly overlapping the first, is being studied in the initiative that has been taken by the University of Groningen in the Netherlands (5). Third, the scenario which comes close to the US situation, in which a minimum of structural coordination is contained in the 50 state higher education systems, and a number of policy instruments are used to identify differences in content and quality between the institutions.

Combined with other limitations on enhanced internationalization (such as the limited possibilities of exporting the national student grant and loan facilities for study abroad), the lack of coordination in the basic elements of the higher education structure could be a serious handicap to the future expansion of more in-depth internationalization initiatives. The type of EC programs at present established are, however successful, probably the most that can be achieved within the collective national boundaries.

In the following chapter the plausibility and desirability of a more European higher education policy will be monitored, using empirical data.

CHAPTER 3 THE PLAUSIBILITY AND DESIRABILITY OF A EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY

3.1 Introduction

The basic attitude of most European countries to the establishment of a supra national education policy has been protective. Future policy for education was not, until recently, connected to any international dimension. The tide has now changed: a more international orientation is unavoidable. But the real flood is still to come.

The development of national educational structures is traditionally a blend of the national culture and a reflection of the politico-economic structure. The fact that a national higher education system is partly an expression of the aim of preserving the national cultural heritage will in practice always imply a limitation on international orientation. But it is most likely that, in the coming decade, more and more European governments will be confronted with the choice of adapting their policy and structures in a certain direction or of remaining in isolation. The introduction of a single market will, if the competitive performance of higher education graduates in an international perspective is to be successful, perhaps offer some kind of "solution" for a number of present issues. In order to map current problems and to discuss possible scenarios for the future, information from different sources and empirical values are set against each other in the following two paragraphs.

3.2 Delphi-study

In the academic year 1989-1990, a large scale Delphi-study was carried out under the title "Policy instruments for higher education in the Western Europe of the future". Around 700 participants contributed by filling in three consecutive questionnaires. Seventeen countries were included in Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Eight groups form each country were invited to participate:

a. the most senior officer of all universities (or institutions with university status) in all countries. In the various countries, this role has different titles: Vice-Chancellor, President, Rector, voorzitter van het college van bestuur etc.

b. the most senior officer of non-university institutions in countries with a binary system (for instance: the polytechnics, Fachhochschulen, regional colleges, instellingen voor hoger beroepsonderwijs). Owing to the very large number of these institutions of this type in the Federal Republic of Germany, France and Norway, a random reduction of the number of institutions was decided upon.

c. the chairmen of national advisory bodies, national research councils, Academies of Science and intermediate organizations.

d. the chairmen of national student unions

e. Parliamentary representatives specializing in higher education policy from all parties represented in Parliament

f. The largest 15 companies, in terms of sales, per country

g. Fifteen higher education specialists per country, chosen at random, who have published on issues relevant to the research project in the English language in the period 1980-1988

h. The most senior officer of universities in countries with a uniform system (Finland, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland)

The results of this study will be available at the beginning of 1991.

In the three consecutive questionnaires, a number of questions in the three rounds focussed on the desirability and possibility of a more centralized European higher education policy. In this paragraph some of the draft statistics will be used to monitor the issues of future European higher education policy. As already mentioned, the report, including the European section, will be completed at the beginning of 1991.

interpretation of the scores

The three questionnaires contained in most cases statements that had to be judged in terms of appreciation. The scale was from one to seven, in which the 1 represented a strong disagreement and the 7 a strong agreement. For reasons of statistical reliability, the line of sufficient and insufficient support is drawn at 3.80. This implies that in examples in which scores are presented, a score below 3.80 implies insufficient support and from 3.80 upwards sufficient support.

It has to be remarked, that the scores represent the opinions of experts who were challenged to judge statements in a specifically created setting. Rejection or acceptance of a statement is therefore the interpretation of these experts on what is right and wrong.

expectations

In the first round, the statements whether "the opening of the borders after 1992 calls for the development of a centralized European higher

education policy" (alternative 1), or on the contrary "...does not call for a centralized European higher education policy" (alternative 2), were presented to the participants.

The first alternative, the central policy, scores a mean score of 3.77 (SD 2.12) which is just below the statistical border of agree and disagree. The second alternative, no central policy, receives support: 4.27 (SD 2.18). A third, and possible intermediate alternative "the opening of the border after 1992 calls for more international competition between institutions" reflects a consequence which is accepted by a large percentage of the population of respondents. With the score 5.31 (SD 1.45) it scores high.

The variety of opinions on these issues within the separate groups and within the separate countries is remarkable. If the scores per country are compared on the two issues: does the opening of the borders after 1992 call for a centralized European higher education policy: yes or no?

The country scores show the following picture:

figure 2. a central European policy ?

country	agree with central Europ h.e. policy	do not agree with central Eur.h.e. policy	Central Europ. h.e. policy yes/no
Austria	2.44 SD 1.68	5.50 SD 1.65	no
Belgium	5.00 SD 2.20	3.00 SD 2.22	yes
Denmark	3.31 SD 1.85	4.89 SD 2.05	no
FR.Germ.	2.90 SD 1.74	5.24 SD 1.66	no
Finland	2.90 SD 1.64	5.04 SD 1.65	no
France	5.54 SD 1.80	2.41 SD 1.97	yes
Greece	4.50 SD 1.91	4.25 SD 1.25	undec.
Ireland	4.21 SD 2.32	3.28 SD 2.16	yes
Italy	5.27 SD 2.24	2.90 SD 2.16	yes
Luxemb.	5.60 SD 2.60	2.20 SD 2.68	yes
Netherl.	3.14 SD 1.67	4.87 SD 1.79	no
Norway	3.07 SD 1.65	4.75 SD 1.85	no
Portugal	4.88 SD 1.93	3.66 SD 2.24	yes
Spain	5.05 SD 1.89	3.16 SD 2.03	yes
Sweden	2.36 SD 1.43	5.76 SD 1.42	no
Switzerl.	4.45 SD 1.98	3.80 SD 1.98	yes
Un.Kgdom.	2.93 SD 1.86	5.07 SD 1.95	no

note: participation rates of Greece, Italy and Luxembourg are too low to meet any standard of generalization.

Membership of the EC or EFTA has no effect on the judgement represented by the combined country scores. Countries in which the "no" to a centralized European policy was the most clearly supported by a "yes" to the absence of a centralized European higher education policy are, Austria, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, Sweden and the UK. The reverse (agree with centralized policy, disagree with its absence) can be observed in the country scores of France, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain.

National politicians, as a group, were the strongest in their opposition to a central European h.e. policy, and the strongest in support of "no" central policy. This idea of potential loss of control of higher education issues at the national level, is not apparently attractive.

Combining these scores in the following round of the study, the statement "higher education in the future should enhance internationalization, in which a supra-national body (for instance the EC) has a stimulating but non-administrative function" was presented. The score (5.88 SD 0.99) showed consensus, even within the group of participating politicians.

An alternative scenario for a government-directed national or international higher education policy, could be a more self-regulatory system in which institutions can shape their own policy on the basis of mutual competition. Indeed, the statement that "the opening of the borders after 1992 calls for more international competition between institutions" received strong support. On the subject of possible competition, four issues received specific attention according to the respondents. Types of competition that could serve a positive role are (ranked in the order of support given):

1. competition for highly qualified academic staff,
2. competition related to quality of individual institutions,
3. competition for students,
4. competition for international funds.

first conclusion: limitations of European higher education policy

This leads to the first conclusion. The consequences of the introduction of a single market are important for higher education and scientific research. There is a need for some policy of stimulation and coordination at the European level, but which is clearly not an administrative power. Increased competition between institutions in future European higher education is widely accepted as an important force.

a policy of active encouragement

What could, or should, be the subject of a policy for coordination and encouragement? In the study the respondents were presented with a number of more or less concrete issues. The following subjects could be subject to a more harmonized European higher education policy (ranked in the order of support received):

* the introduction of interchangeable teaching modules,
* the harmonization of titles and qualifications,
* the development of an international quality assessment system,
* the classification of disciplines,
* the harmonization of curriculum regulations, regulating a minimum content for studies,
* the harmonization of the educational model and the course length,
* the introduction of a Europe-oriented core curriculum.

the objective of mobility

As could be expected, the participants were strongly in favor of the enhancement of international student (and staff) mobility. The most important present EC-program aimed at this goal, Erasmus, was almost unanimously rated as a very good tool for stimulating and accelerating mobility. The suggestion that "for the near future, international mobility programs should be maintained" attracted a very high degree of consensus. Five specific areas of international h.e. policy serving the aim of mobility scored high in the Delphi study (ranked in the order of support received):

a. the introduction of an entitlement to export student grants;
b. the establishment of networks of information between exchanging

institutions;

c. a centrally distributed European topping up grant, which would be centrally distributed (e.g by the EC) and which would take account of and supplements the national grant where available

d. an institutional responsibility to offer in each course of study the possibility of one or more modules which should be studied abroad at another institution

e. the general introduction of a European credit-points system (similar to the present European Credit Transfer System) should be considered for national and international programs;

f. a central European information network containing courses and modules offered by European institutions, including quantitative information on courses and modules as well as information on quality as is available.

Three major threats to student mobility were recognized.

first problem: languages

The first problem is the variety of languages. Within the EC, nine official languages are recognized. If other West-European countries were to be included, the number would rise to 12 and if East-European official languages would be added, the total of at least 18 different languages will form an important socio-political and cultural obstacle. In that respect, the US has a clear advantage in terms of higher education policy, being a federation of 50 different states with a common language. Would the introduction of one "academic" language be a step in the right direction? According to a large majority of the respondents (4.90, SD 1.81), this would be the case. If one could choose, which language would it be:

table: 3. if an academic language were to be agreed upon, which one would it be?

* English = 61.5 %
* French = 10.4 %
* German = 8.7 %
* Spanish = 3.4 %

(Note: the question was an open question, only answered by 357 of the respondents)

The fact that languages are, and in the near future will be, a major obstacle has to be accepted. Would the institutions of higher education have some responsibility for dealing with this problem? Yes, according respondents, they "should play a major role in solving this problem". This statement received support throughout all groups, with the universities most in favor.

second problem: recognition of courses

A second factor that causes problems for the mobility of students is the issue of recognition of their foreign educational performance by their home institution. The question of recognition of programs, courses and/or modules, is one of the most complicated issues in the areas of future cooperation between institutions and mobility of students. It directly interferes with the issue of academic autonomy of institutions. The undisputed basis for substantive academic freedom (see f.i. Berdahl, 1971) is the right of faculty to decide upon the content, method of teaching and examination. Being forced to accept other, in their opinion possibly inferior, courses from other institutions, might violate that basic right. In practice, the difficulty of reaching agreements on supra-national

curriculum regulations in the field of medicine, engineering and architecture, can be explained by the fear of an increasing oversight threatening academic freedom.

The results of a number of conflicting alternatives presented on this issue in the Delphi-study showed a mixed picture, which might indicative of the discussion and development this issue still has to go through in the coming years. The contrasting statements "automatic and full recognition of foreign modules by the home institutions should be guaranteed" and "academic freedom of home institutions implies no automatic acceptance of modules from other institutions" were both accepted. Statistically the alternative of the automatic and full recognition scored more strongly than the latter. An intermediate solution: "automatic and full recognition by the home institution would be guaranteed if a European module accreditation center accredits the module. The development of such a supra-national institution should be considered" also rated support.

Combined with the high scores on the development of an international quality assessment system in other propositions in the questionnaires, the conclusion can be drawn that, if automatic and full recognition is not a possibility for the future, the combined development of a European version of the US accreditation systems together with other international quality assessment procedures and the use of a number of performance indicators (6), might be the basis of a solution to this complicated problem.

third problem: no export of student grants and loans

A third obstacle to international student mobility that there is no possibility of exporting national student grants for study abroad, combined with the difficulty of covering additional expenses.

Of the alternatives presented to arrive at a possible solution, the possibility of exporting of student grant facilities combined with a centrally distributed European topping-up grant received the most favorable rating.

summarizing schedule

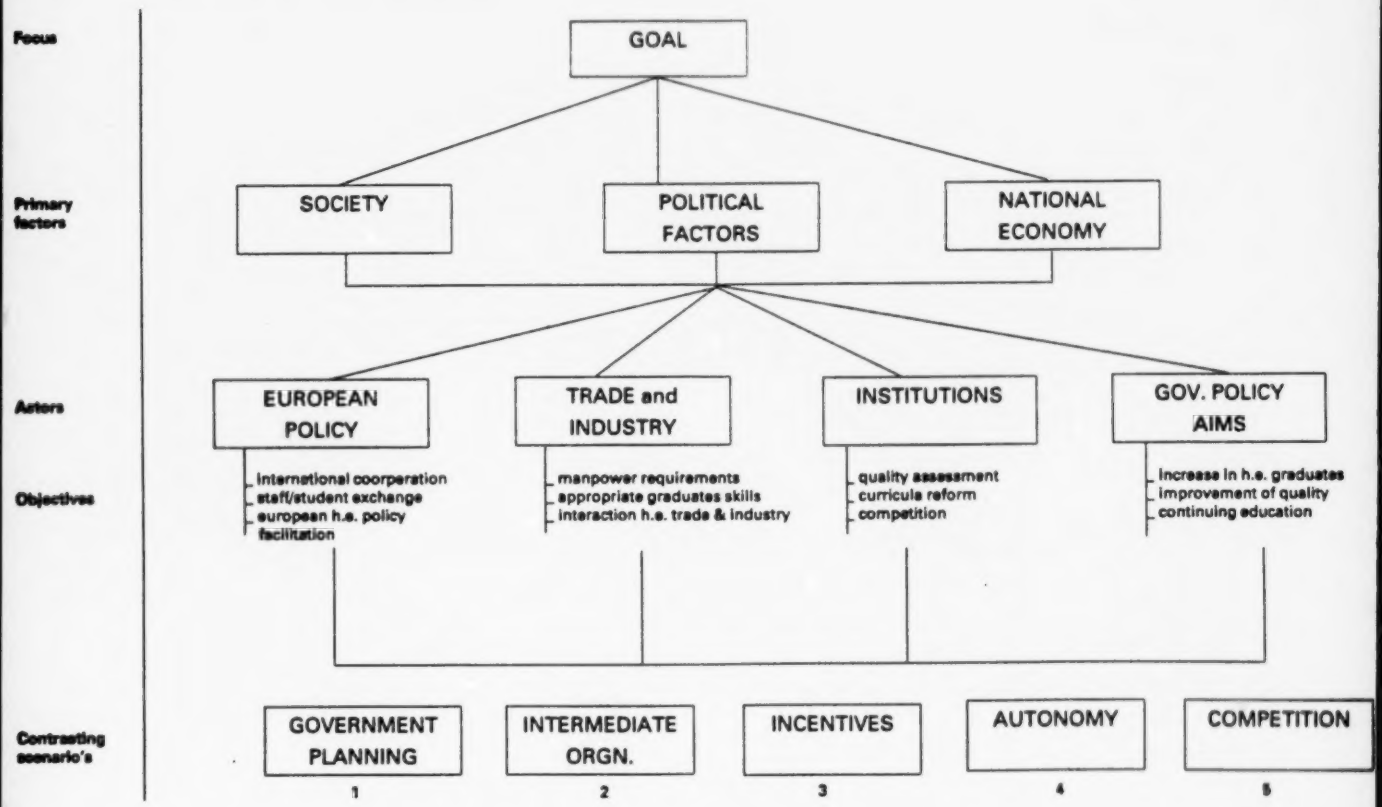
In the following figure, the general results of the statements from the statistical analysis of the first and second round are scheduled in terms of general scores. This is the total of all scores of all participants, regardless of country and/or group differences.

figure 4. Summarizing results of the Delphi study on the possibilities and potentialities of a more central European policy.

multi-criteria analysis

In the third round of the project, a multi-criteria analysis is presented (methodology used: the SAATY method) in which the hierarchy of factors and objectives related to or influential for the pre-set goals was subjected to study. One of the factors was possible European h.e. policy focussed on the highest scoring (and therefore least controversial) objectives of international cooperation, staff/student exchange and the facilitation of a European h.e. policy. Unfortunately, the full statistical analysis of the method used was not yet available at the time that the preparations for this paper had to be completed. The results will be presented in the final report. The hierarchy presented to the participants of the project is scheduled below:

figure 5. SAATY matrix



3.3 The US case: the potentiality of federal higher education policy

3.3.1 Introduction

Higher education policy in the USA is formally under the authority of the states. According to the constitution, the Tenth Amendment "established the principle that education in general was not under federal jurisdiction; thus it fell by default to state jurisdiction" (Berdahl, 1987 p. 40). "The conditions in each state determine form and powers" of the way in which higher education policy is shaped (Glenny, 1985 p.13).

The states have been, since the 1960s, more and more active in shaping higher educational policy. A large number of studies by state governing and coordinating boards, consultants or study commissions have produced a flood of documents in nearly all states.
McGuinness (1986, appendix) guides us through the significant titles of policy documents that express the massive attention paid to it the states (7).

3.3.2 Balance of power

In the balance of power between federal and state authority on higher education policy, the federal legislator has authority limited to the following four concrete instruments (8):

a. the federal student grant and loan system
b. the allocation of money for basic research, through the National Science Foundation
c. the tax-laws which secure tax-deductibility of private donations to higher education institutions (9)

d. the gathering of information at federal, state and institutional level via the National Center for Educational Statistics.

The role of the federal government in higher education has been of vital importance in history and has not always been limited to the four instruments. If the history of federal involvement in higher education in the US is analyzed, political initiatives on the federal level were accepted for five different types of reasons:

1. To catalyze the development of the system in certain moments in history, whenever the decentralized model could not cope with all the changes required. Examples are the Land-grant Acts (1862 and 1890, see Liggio and Meiners, 1989 p. 224), which more or less set the system of state higher education in motion, and the development of the community college system as an expression of the need of a new school type for specific groups in society.

2. As a necessary coordination of policy for issues in which decentralization and diversity would not be productive to the needs of the system at a macro-level. A good example is the simple educational model: a first degree is the bachelor's degree and the second is the master's degree. The qualitative level is not subject to general agreement (the quality of degrees vary considerably between "Ivy league" institutions and "US academic Siberia"), but the basic structure is. All bachelor programs are four years, all master programs on top of the baccalaureate one or two years. This very basic understanding has no influence on the great diversity within the system.

3. For the central distribution of funds, in those cases in which decentralized distribution would not be in the best interest of a competitive system. An important part of research (especially basic research) is, for instance, funded on a competitive basis through the National Science Foundation, the US research council which allocated over 11 billion dollars in 1989.

4. To achieve specific political goals formulated at the federal level and difficult to implement at the decentralized level. Here are three different examples. First of all the pursuit of a high level of accessibility as a expression of social and economic need. The introduction of the present student aid system (the so called: Pell grant and Stafford loan) provides from the federal level a basic facility for the improvement of accessibility of the system. The system is complemented by a network of institutional and (in some states) state facilities to provide educational opportunities. Second, also directed at access, is a specific measure in the form of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (better known as the GI-Bill, 1944) which offered educational opportunities to War Veterans. Third there is the dark page in American history of the McCarthy era in which a "Red Hunt" was organized with the aim to protect American society (10).

5. To set up a central information bureau to gather and compare information, of the state and institutional level, which is open to the public (National Center for Education Statistics).

These initiatives left the states primary responsibility untouched. The

higher education system in the US remained a collection of 50, sometimes very different, higher education systems. Any attempts to introduce new federal initiatives have to overcome major opposition (see for instance Kerr, 1982 p. 176), or are carefully monitored as to their effects on state and institutional autonomy (Meiners and Amacher, 1989). There is a basic lack of trust in the federal government and the reasons for new federal initiatives must be very convincing before a proposal is considered. In addition to the different type of separation of power between the legislator and the executive in the US compared to Europe (11) this basic lack of trust is the explanation of why the federal department of education has never achieved an influential position in the higher education debate, as it has in most European countries. In 1953, President Eisenhower founded the department of Health, Education and Welfare. The Carter Presidency created the Department of Education, which had a hard time during the Reagan administration, but was not abolished.

3.3.3 Favorable factors in US higher education

Monitoring the US example to determine whether a supra-national policy on the European level is a future possibility, without endangering the relative autonomy of the individual countries, requires an understanding of the specific favorable conditions in US higher education. These conditions contribute to the relative success of the balance of power.

The conditions are:

a. one language (in Europe a large number of languages);
b. uniformity in educational structure but public known and accepted diversity of quality standards of institutions (in Europe: diversity of structure and uniformity in quality);
c. within the US, a pattern of student mobility as a rule (while in Europe

it is still and exception). The mainly modular structure enables students to be mobile (in Europe no significant supra-national arrangements available).

d. multiple constituencies are sources of innovation i.s.o. federal authorities. Especially the notion of consumer sovereignty is more strongly developed in the US compared to Europe. Additional advantage is the greater financial independence from government.

e. a notion of quality difference and competition between institutions for students, funds, faculty etc.

3.3.4 conclusions

The US example shows, that a supra national policy without interference in the states autonomy is a possibility. The fact that US higher education has one basic structure with accepted differences in quality between institutions does not lead to a lack of system transparency for society in general and consumers in particular. On the contrary ! The fact that the differences in quality are the result of a combination of peer review and ranking according to a number of performance indicators -though permanent subject of intense discussion- offers consumers a the possibility of a well grounded choice. The uniform structure stimulates mobility. Moving from one institution to another is possible without having to change language (excluded a slight adaptation of slang and accent) or adjust to completely different and often confusion structures. Federal higher education policy has in the US proven to be successful whenever innovation was required that could not be provided by the institutions or states itself. Furthermore, it plays an important role in the realization of a limited number of generally accepted policy goals such as affirmative action and accessibility.

CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 question one

In chapter 1, three basic questions were formulated. In this chapter some conclusions relating these questions will be answered.

The first question was:

> Do the introduction of a single market in 1993, increasing cooperation of EC-countries with non EC countries, and the opening-up of Eastern-Europe require a supra-national, European wide, higher education policy?

Using the sources of present EC-programs, the first results of the Delphi study and the analysis of the federal structure of higher education in the US, the answer on the first question has to be a modest and constrained "yes". The external pressures on higher education in Europe that are moving us towards a coordinating and more integrating higher education policy, have never been stronger. It is likely that they will become even more influential in the coming years. The conditions however are not yet favorable for a supra-national higher education policy. Four reasons can be identified:

1. the experts and persons responsible (especially the politicians) have clear hesitations;
2. maintaining isolation in national interests and priorities is still stronger than international orientation;
3. the present Brussels bureaucracy has, in terms of powers allocated, has reached it maximum possibility in promoting cooperation/mobility through separate programs. Further success is hampered by the structural diversity of h.e. systems in the various countries;

4. the different languages form an important practical barrier.

Nevertheless the development of a supra-national body with a stimulating but not administrative function (for instance the EC) could facilitate strengthening of the present internationalization.

4.2 Question two

The second question was:

> If so, what different scenarios can be designed for the division of labor between the supra-national policy organization and the individual national governments.
>
> Or more concretely: What issues could or should be subject to a European h.e. policy, what subjects could or should be left to the national governments, and why?

The development of a supra-national body with a stimulating but not administrative function (for instance the EC) could lead to more cohesion and coordination in European higher education policy. Prime targets for international coordination could be:

* the introduction of interchangeable teaching modules,
* the harmonization of titles and qualifications,
* the development of an international quality assessment system,
* the classification of disciplines,
* the harmonization of curriculum regulations, regulating a minimum content for studies,
* the harmonization of the educational model and the course length,
* the introduction of a Europe-oriented core curriculum.
* the development of an international quality assessment system

Further more a European higher education policy could stimulate,

propose/decide:

a. the introduction of an entitlement to export student grants;

b. the establishment of networks of information between exchanging institutions;

c. a centrally distributed European topping up grant, which would be centrally distributed (e.g by the EC) and which would take account of and supplements the national grant where available

d. the institutional responsibility to offer in each course of study the possibility of one or more modules which should be studied abroad at another institution

e. the general introduction of a European credit-points system (similar to the present European Credit Transfer System) for national and international programs;

f. a central European information network containing courses and modules offered by European institutions, including quantitative information on courses and modules as well as information on quality as is available.

A further step could be:

1. a European student grants and loan system
2. a European Research Council
3. European networks and study centers
4. a European higher education policy:
   * to catalyze desired development
   * to coordinate basic structures
   * distribute funds
   * design policy instruments for specific policy goals

A European higher education policy should not copy the failure of policy

directing on the national levels, and not become another paper tiger bureaucracy. Mechanisms should in principle be self-regulatory and enhanced competition between institutions for should be a stimulation factor. The competition could be directed to:

1. competition for highly qualified academic staff,
2. competition related to quality of individual institutions,
3. competition for students,
4. competition for international funds.

4.3 Third question

The third question was:

> What are the changes/limitations involved in the establishment of a more European-wide higher education policy?

Major obstacles for the development of a more open higher education in Europe are:

a. the lack of an international policy through a supra-national authority. The EC has limited power on educational affairs at this moment and the discussion on expanding the EC-treaty has only recently started. Given national interests it will not be design the conditions under which the authority of the EC can be expanded.

b. languages. A possible, but unlikely, could be the introduction of a one academic language. If this would be considered, the English language gained the largest support.

c. recognition of courses. The present methods of formal recognition have reached their limits. Further increase of automatic recognition could tough upon the issue of academic freedom and autonomy of institutions of higher education. The desire to solve this problem causes a mixture of conflicting opinions. The development of some sort of Europe-wide

accrediting agency together with international assessment systems and the use of a number of performance indicators, might form the basis of the solution of this complicated problem.

d. export of student grant and loans. The existence of national student grants and loan systems which are only exportable in a limited number of cases of foreign study, is a clear handicap in the pursuit of mobility.

NOTES

1. An interesting issue of future debate of national research funding, is the issue of increased international competition of industry. As Derek Bok, president of Harvard states: "science respects no national boundaries. (...) With information exchanged so freely, it is relatively easy for business enterprises in one country to learn basic discoveries made in another. By reading scientific journals, sending scientists to international meetings, monitoring patents and trade journals, and encouraging graduate students to study abroad, Japanese and European concerns can readily stay abreast of scientific advances in the United States and quickly put them to use for their own commercial advantage" (Bok, 1990 page 17). This phenomenon, which in the US led to dubious proposals by politicians and institutions, could in an internationally oriented pattern of behavior in science projects at national universities in Europe become a scapegoat for national governments to reduce their support to basic research.

2. Higher Education and 1992, Planning for the year 2000, Siena November 5-7 1990.

3. See for instance Cerych and Sabatier 1986, Volkwein 1986 and 1988, Newman 1987, Fischer 1988, Hines 1988, van Vught 1989, mc-Daniel 1990a en 1990b. In the Delphi study referred to in chapter 3 a more detailed outline will be presented to the opinions of the 700 respondents regarding appreciation and success of government policy direction (mc-Daniel, 1991, forthcoming).

4. Commission of the European Communities, Memorandum on the rationalization and coordination of vocational training programs at community level, August 21, 1990 COM(90) 334 page 7.

5. The Center for Research on University Education in Groningen is organizing a conference on comparison of curricula in higher education in 1991, in order to establish a methodological approach in curriculum comparison.

6. In the Delphi study, second round, participants were asked to judge a number of performance indicators related to quality and quality assessment. Ranked in the order of support given, the following indicators were distinguished:
   * academic reputation of the academic staff
   * external peer review on the contents of the curriculum
   * completion rates
   * external peer review on the teaching process
   * average duration of student' stay
   * student evaluation of staff teaching motivation
   * entrance qualifications of students
   * formal qualification of staff
   * number of Ph.D.s
   * percentage of staff member with a Ph.D.

7. McGuinness, Director of the Education Commission of the States, presents a number of Green and White Paper titles in his handbook 1988: "Challenge-Obligation-Opportunity: the Imperative for Excellence in Higher Education" (Alabama, 1983), "Quality Development in Higher

Education to Meet the Future Needs of Arkansas" (1984), "Investing in Connecticut's Future: A Strategic Plan for Higher Education" (1986), "A Path to Excellence in Public Higher Education in Florida (1985), "The Eighties and Beyond: A Commitment to Excellence" (Georgia, 1983), "The Future of Higher Education in Idaho" (1983), "Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Kentucky" (1985), "Maryland Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education" (1986), "Putting Our Minds Together: New Directions for Michigan Higher Education" (1984), "Postsecondary Education in Minnesota: A Commitment to Quality, Access and Diversity" (1984), "Pathways to Accountability and Excellence: A Final Report on the Status and Future of Public Higher Education in Mississippi (1979), "Towards the 21st Century" (Nebraska, 1984), "The Future is Excellence" (New Mexico, 1983), "The Challenge and the Choice" (New York, 1985), "Tomorrow's Expectations, Challenges for Today" (North Carolina, 1985), "Higher Education in South Carolina: An Agenda for the Future" (1986), "Informing the Future: A Plan for Higher Education in the Eighties" (Texas, 1980), "The Paramount Duty" (Washington, 1985), "Revitalization and Renewal" (West-Virginia, 1984). The increase of interest is also highlighted in the increase of the number of Blue Ribbon commissions. In 1986, McGuinness pointed to the increase in commissions in the Eighties with the task of reshaping the state higher education landscape: in the period 1980-1986, 40 commissions focussed on higher education in the states.

McGuinness (1986) summarizes the issues that motivate initiation of state studies on higher education studies:

* a need for a strong tie between higher education and the state's economy
* an overall mismatch between the way higher education is organized and delivered and the changing educational needs of the state and its people
* a recognition of the connection between quality of higher education and the quality of the public schools
* concerns that the higher education system may be overextended
* actual or potential duplication of high-cost graduate and professional programs
* visible conflict between the aspirations of two institutions
* legislative reaction to intense institutional lobbying
* proposals to close, merge or change the mission of institutions
* concerns about the need for improvement among the many institutions offering one- and two-year vocational, technical or occupational programs
* concerns about the effectiveness of the state coordinating or governing agency.

8. The federal influence on higher education is, through general legislation which is geared to the pursuit of a list of social goals such as equality among the races, measures to overcome discrimination against women, environmental protection, health-care services, safety in the workplace, minimum wage-laws (see Bok, 1982 p. 7-8). Another example is the anti-trust legislation.

9. This "function" of the federal government is seldom mentioned in the analyses of the formal governance structure of US higher education. Yet it is to a large extent the engine of the important private sector (1841 institutions of post secondary education are private in the US, 1548 are public, according to the Carnegie Foundation, 1987, p 5.).

10 "The most conspicuous feature of the immediately post-World War II years in academe was the "Red Hunt" carried out on many university campuses by the Dies Committee, aided and abetted by Senator McCarthy, whose line was communists in government, while the Dies Committee pursued radicals on college campuses and in the labor movement and the entertainment world" (Smith, P. Killing the Spirit, New York, 1990 p. 137).

11 The fact that the powers of government and the de facto initiative to present legislation are in different hands in most West-European countries on the one side and the US on the other, generates misunderstanding and misinterpretation. The fact that the European government bureaucracies (which are in fact the designers of higher education policy) are compared with the much smaller bureaus of the executive (which has a more implementing and accounting function) is the underlying theme in this misunderstanding. Comparing the number of persons involved in the process of advising the federal or state legislators (the Congressmen and Senators) and in designing h.e. policy, the size of the US bureaucracy is much more like that of the West-European countries with the exception of some very centralized countries like France and Spain. (see for instance White, 1989).

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